

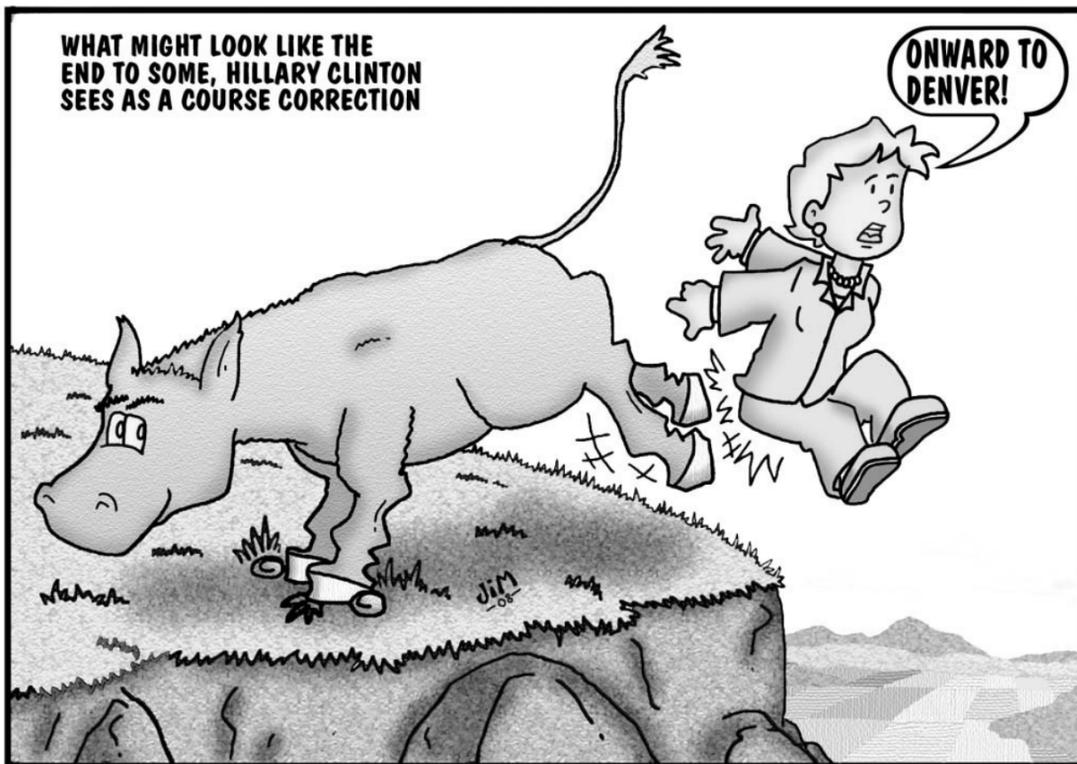
## HE SAID

"Hillary, you've been a great candidate, better than your train-wreck campaign. You're Churchillian in your indomitable tenacity. You've inspired women all over the country. In fact, you've inspired some of them to hate me. But now its time for you to try to muster a gracious exit."

Maureen Dowd, giving voice to Barack Obama

## Outbursts

By Jim Brenneman



## Natalia Mount

## A European world filled with art, music, literature and tragedy

This is the second of two articles on Natalia Mount, managing director Redhouse

"It was a wonderful world, a great way to grow up. I was a very fortunate child." It was Natalia Mount talking to me in Redhouse, Armory Square.

She is a petite, lovely blond, bursting with energy. And she needs this energy as the managing director of Redhouse overseeing the presentation of art, film, music and theater. A big job.

But today she was talking about twenty-five years ago growing up in Sofia, Bulgaria, a Communist country at the time.

"My mother and father took me to theater performances almost every weekend. All the arts were very accessible in terms of ticket price. For a few dollars you would be able to see a play or opera."

She contrasted that with New York or Washington's Kennedy Center where the cheapest tickets could be \$40.

"Here, in America, the arts and the theater are for the well to do. In Bulgaria everyone could go to films and theater for a few dollars," she said. "I remember going to hear Verdi at the Opera when I was five and being on stage giving out flowers. The opera houses as well as the theaters were packed with people."

When she was older she saw plays by Berthold Brecht, Samuel Beckett and Dostoevsky.

Her heroes were her mother and father. They were both journalists and authors. Their work brought them into contact with the leading figures in Sofia's



Richard Long

The long view

cultural life.

"But, there were restrictions in this world, because it was dominated by the Communists," she said. "If you were an artist, for example, you would have to go to Paris to have free expression. Communist art is mostly art showing the rise of the workers. Other forms of art-- writing, music-- were affected by their strict rules."

The happy day came, however, when the Berlin wall fell in 1989.

"We were free. It was a wonderful feeling. It affected everything in Bulgaria."

Shortly afterwards, however, there was tragedy in her family. Her father, her hero, was killed in an automobile accident. She was a passenger in the car.

"It was a terrible time. But you have to go on. Shortly after the funeral I joined my mother in New York City," she said.

Before her father died he was the editor-in-chief of "Economy", a magazine he founded in Bulgaria.

"My mom, Violeta Kurnurdjieva, came to America to help write a book on Bulgarian poetry," she said.

Her mother met the noted Irish author and investigative reporter Martin Dillon at a reading for his book "Stone Cold." They were married in New York City in 2002.

The Irish Times described Dillon as "standing alone

as one of the most creative writers of our time." Born in Belfast, he wrote his first book, "Political Murder in Northern Ireland," while he was a newspaper reporter.

Romance came about for Natalia when she met her future husband Andrew Mount at a Thanksgiving party in New York City in 1989. He is from Liverpool, England and is an artist. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree at Hunter College. Natalia and Andrew got married six months after they met.

As mentioned in the first story, Natalia had extensive art management experience in top jobs in New York City. In speaking of her husband she said, "He totally changed my life, because before I met him I was accepted in law school. After we met, though, it seemed that we wanted to spend our time working together, doing creative things together, we wanted to be together all the time...very romantic."

Andrew Mount had some top-flight pressure filled jobs in the New York Art world. After their children, a boy and a girl, came along they decided that the quieter areas of Upstate New York would be a better place to bring them up.

They live in the University section of Syracuse. Andrew Mount is the Director of Dowd Fine Art Gallery at State University of New York, Cortland.

Richard Long is a former Washington correspondent for the Syracuse Newspapers. He currently writes for the Skaneateles Press and City Eagle and other Eagle newspapers. He can be reached at rickulysses@yahoo.com

## City scuffle



ELLEN LEAHY

Watch out for parking tickets: Fireman Dwayne Britt glides down the court during the last fastbreak. He drove home another 2 points with ease before hitting the wall at the buzzer.

## The finest vs. the bravest

Samadee could not admit that he had become bored with politics. It would be, he knew, only a temporary state. There was the open mayoral race coming next year, and, in the beginning at least, it would be way open. But after failing to find a way to be taken seriously in the County Executive race, a way to access the Presidential primary debates, or an appropriate occasion to announce his Congressional intentions, he knew he would become, again, an observer of the process, giving up all hope of realizing the mythical potential of every young boy to grow up to be elected. He would, however, maintain the sacred tradition of the secret ballot, not telling anyone how he would vote.

As he sat on Hanover Square for the season's first big Friday night with Under the Gun, he pondered the general consensus that the mayoral race would cost at least a half million dollars.

After almost a half century of watching the polls and polecats, he really wanted to contend. But he knew he would never relinquish his pledge to not take any campaign contributions, and besides, the people on the Square had started mentioning Joe Nicoletti. With his role as proprietor of the Botanical Gardens in the Westcott Nation now buried in nostalgia, Samadee knew he would have to find a new focus for his consciousness while he waited for the polar ice caps to melt. Actually, there was a chance he could recycle one.

## Over 40 with game

Samadee's daily routine, first thing in the morning at the YMCA, kept him in touch with the elements of identity which had established his place in the universe through an extended adolescence. The locker room chatter, comments thrown back at ESPN commentators, the quiet camaraderie of showers and steam, recalled the comfort of having a role as part of a team through high school and college. He had seldom ventured onto the Y's court, and hadn't touched a ball for five years, but the spark had been reignited months back at the SouthWest Community Center as he watched the championship tournament of the Baby Boomers Basketball League. The players, all over 40, played an intense game--but, knowing each other mostly since elementary school and having no intention of hurting each other, or themselves--not a physical one.

If he could get his wind and his legs back, Samadee thought, he could play with these folks. Half-joking, he told Puddin and Ed Mitchell he wanted a tryout with B&B Lounge for next year. They did not seem to be joking when they nodded at his request. Then the spark flared last week as he sat with Deputy Chief Frank Fowler in the Nottingham gym for the 4th annual Bravest vs. Finest basketball game between the city's police and fire departments. A former SFD player had told Samadee that Fowler had tapped Project Impact to bolster the SPD roster with Sheriff's Deputies and State Troopers. "Naw," the Chief assured him, "guaranteed all SPD. But it looks like the firefighters are dipping into D One. I'm gonna start a fire in a trash can and see how they respond."

## The white boys couldn't jump

Actually, Fowler needed to light the fire under his own team, as the Bravest established early control of the boards, limiting the Finest to one shot each trip down the floor, while scoring often after offensive rebounds. The action turned physical early, as players dived on the floor after loose balls, while volunteers worked the bleachers, raising funds for Nottingham's music and arts programs by selling tickets to a half and half raffle. Samadee called the chief's attention to the composition of each team. The Bravest included only one white boy, the Finest only one brother. Fowler nodded, reflecting it was an area he definitely needed to do some recruiting, although rejecting Samadee's suggestion that donut consumption might be weighing down the SPD rebounders.

After Nottingham's pep band and the school's National Drumming Ensemble conveyed the event's community spirit during half time, the game got seriously physical, as the Finest invoked the no lay-up rule. The teams' contrasting styles recalled battles from back in the day between parochial league teams and public school teams. The SPD closed the score to within three points with 1:03 left in the game, but clutch shooting from former Corcoran standout Dwayne Britt in the last 30 seconds sealed the win for the firefighters." Now we all got to worry about getting parking tickets," SFD coach Lonnie Johnson quipped as his team celebrated.

The next day at the Y Samadee signed up with a personal trainer.

Walt Shepperd